

Message

From: Ann Looney [alooney@moses-ma.org]
Sent: 8/22/2011 2:18:12 PM
To: Hanchett, James (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=James.Hanchett]; Salem, Sharon (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=Sharon.Salem]; Pontes, Rebecca (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=Rebecca.Pontes]; Farak, Sonja (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=Sonja.Farak]
CC: 'Bridget Quinn' [bkq1974@yahoo.com]; Salemi, Charles (DPH) [/O=COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS/OU=MassMail-01/cn=Recipients/cn=Charles.Salemi]
Subject: FW: Daily Hampshire Gazette 8/20 story

FYI

From: Colleen Turner [mailto:colleen@btc-boston.com]
Sent: Saturday, August 20, 2011 8:39 AM
To: Joe Dorant; [REDACTED] Mickey Splaine, DOT; Ann Looney; Mary Richards, DEP; Jill Clemmer, DPH; Smiglani, Alex (DCR); John Grady, Housing & Comm. Dev.
Subject: Re: Daily Hampshire Gazette 8/20 story

Joe, et al:

You had mentioned Bob F. phoned you, but as you can see, his story focuses on the police impact. All good, regardless.

<http://www.gazettenet.com/2011/08/20/northampton-police-chief-decries-state-plan-to-close-amherst-drug-testing-lab>

Northampton police chief decries state plan to close Amherst drug-testing lab

By BOB FLAHERTY
Staff Writer

Saturday, August 20, 2011

Western Massachusetts' only lab for weighing and testing illegal drugs seized by local law enforcement is about to close, creating a problem for police.

Due to budgetary woes, Gov. Deval Patrick's administration plans to shut the lab, located at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, by Sept. 30.

The lab has long been operated by the state Department of Public Health and employs three chemists and a supervisor.

The amount saved by the layoffs for this fiscal year would be \$227,000, according to a statement released by the department.

Western Massachusetts police departments will likely have to transport seized drug samples to a lab in Jamaica Plain, and must take them there themselves in order to preserve continuity of evidence. The Jamaica Plain lab reportedly has a three-month backlog.

"Terrible idea," Northampton Police Chief Russell Sienkiewicz said today. "It might seem like a sensible savings but it will cost communities in western Mass. a tremendous amount of time. What now takes 40 minutes roundtrip will take four hours. We'll have to pay officers overtime and burn a lot of gasoline. It's not like they're consolidating a lab in Worcester."

The chief said he believes the closing will result in an unnecessary expense for 101 municipalities and the state police.

Sienkiewicz added that police departments can't alter the way they deal with confiscated drugs because the commonwealth has budget problems. "You're not going to pick and choose based on cost," he said. "We can't throw these things in the trash and burn them. It's part of the tracking process police departments do to protect themselves."

Sienkiewicz also said that prosecuting cases will be a nightmare. "It makes things harder for prosecutors. You'll end up dragging out cases," he said. "It's not fair to victims or suspects to postpone, postpone, postpone. The (Supreme Judicial Court) rules that chemists have to testify. What are his costs? The worst-case scenario is that the chemist can't show up and a drug dealer goes free and is back in the community."

"It puts an unfair burden on all municipalities," said Sienkiewicz.

Colleen Turner
BTC-Boston
15 Otis Place - Unit 1
Newburyport, MA 01950

ph: 617.429.2217
fx: 866.849.5967

colleen@btc-boston.com

From: "Joe Dorant" <jdorant@moses-ma.org>
Organization: M.O.S.E.S.
Date: Fri, 19 Aug 2011 17:15:54 -0400
To: <REDACTED>, "Colleen Turner" <colleen@btc-boston.com>, "Splaine, Michael \MHD\)"

<Michael.Splaine@state.ma.us>, "Ann Looney" <alooney@moses-ma.org>
Subject: FW: mary.richards@state.ma.us has shared: Lab closure could hamper prosecution in drug cases

Patriot Ledger picked up Matt's article.

From: ShareThis [mailto:notifier@bounces.sharethis.com] **On Behalf Of** mary.richards@state.ma.us
Sent: Friday, August 19, 2011 4:46 PM
To: jdorant@moses-ma.org
Subject: mary.richards@state.ma.us has shared: Lab closure could hamper prosecution in drug cases

not sure if you saw this yet. good job.

Lab closure could hamper prosecution in drug cases <<http://shar.es/HOL6u>>

Source: patriotledger.com The Patrick administration is planning next month to close the only state drug testing laboratory in western Massachusetts, a move critics warn will further clog an already backlogged system and shift costs to local police departments. <<http://shar.es/HOL6u>>

mary.richards@state.ma.us sent this using ShareThis <<http://sharethis.com>> .